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Secretary Shultz

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The Church as a Force for Peaceful Change in South Africa

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Following is an address by Secretary Shultz before the Conference on South Africa for American Religious Leaders, Department of State, Washington, D.C., June 2, 1986.

Welcome to the State Department. I want to extend my personal thanks to each of you for attending today's conference on "The Church as a Force for Peaceful Change in South Africa." This is a matter we take with great seriousness, and I know you do, too. So I want to go through, rather carefully, some views about this subject for your consideration.

Moral leaders on both sides of the Atlantic are playing an important role in promoting the peaceful change that is essential to South Africa. We welcome your participation in today's conference because peaceful transition requires active participation by men and women of high moral principle.

I think we can take a leaf out of our own book, and I think, to me, the transition that we have made—not complete, but, nevertheless, very strong—particularly in the period immediately following World War II, was tremendously affected by the people of religion, by the spiritual leadership, by the literary community, as our own civil rights movement took place and gave force to the change that we have had and must continue to have in this country. So I put great store by the importance of looking at these issues as matters of morality.

All Americans condemn South Africa's policy of apartheid—institutionalized racial discrimination. Apartheid is wrong. It robs the blacks of South Africa of their fundamental human rights; it drains the country of its human potential; and it threatens the security and economic prospects of an entire subcontinent.

Our people and government have demonstrated that we oppose apartheid. Apartheid must go—and it must yield to a nonracial system based on the consent of all the governed. It must go soon. Let me be categorical on this point. Western interests—moral, strategic, economic, and political—will suffer if the process of constructive, peaceful change fails to deliver the goods in South Africa. Stated another way: an immoral system does not serve our interests; it offends our moral principles; and we must continue to seek to end it.

The Tragedy of Violence

The situation in South Africa today is a continuing tragedy. The death toll from official and factional violence continues to mount. Political polarization, fear, and hatred within South Africa's communities raise ominous prospects for all who care about humanitarian values. As normally decent people resort to barbaric methods, they make a mockery of the very moral and political principles they claim to support. I am speaking of *all* those guilty of these outrages: policemen and prison interrogators who abuse children and torture detainees; the comrades, so-called, with their obscene "necklace" burnings; vigilantes and hooded hit-men who kill political rivals and destroy their houses; guerrillas who use the terrorist tools of mines and plastic explosives against civilians.

Americans witnessing this tragic brutality are appalled. Our hearts go out to those millions of South Africans—black, white, and brown—who are caught in the middle. They are the overwhelming majority.

Just as immoral violence must be rejected by all those committed to a just society, so also must we question the political and moral vision of those who advocate economic destruction as the road to South Africa's salvation. Some would have us believe that the true foes of apartheid are the advocates of punitive economic sanctions and disinvestment. They have failed to make a convincing case.

In saying this, I fully recognize that there are few things as irresistible as the urge to do good deeds in support of a just cause. It is a powerful impulse for Americans, and we all share it, and we should be proud of it. But we have a moral responsibility to consider the consequences of our actions, for others and for ourselves. South Africa's Catholic bishops recognized this when they recently declared:

> . . . intensified [economic] pressure can only be justified if applied in such a way as not to destroy the country's economy and to reduce as far as possible any additional suffering to the oppressed through job loss.

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In saying this, I fully recognize that the growing internal pressures for change and negotiation are, in important part, economic. Very high unemployment and inflation rates, the sharp drop in value of South Africa's rand currency, and the loss of confidence by foreign investors and bankers are all part of a downward economic climate that creates hardship and discontent among South Africans. In selected areas, black organizations have used consumer boycotts to bring pressure upon local authorities to meet their grievances.

The Reality of Change

This leads to my second point. Change is taking place in South Africa. It is occurring unevenly, slowly, sometimes reluctantly or by stealth. But it is simply inaccurate to view apartheid in South Africa as a static system. It is not monolithic. Our policy is based on the premise that South Africa is a society in transition.

The limited changes which have occurred in the basic structure of apartheid point logically and inexorably toward more fundamental change. This prospect is exciting violent minorities at both ends of the political spectrum, and, among other things, we saw those pictures of a violent white minority with their swastika-like insignia that turned us all off, I'm sure. The vast majority of South Africans are caught in the middle, where their fears and anxieties are exploited. Violence has escalated. None of us can permit ultimate victory—in the form of a democratic society for all South Africans—to be wrenched from us by extremes of the left or right.

In my view, change in South Africa is occurring for many reasons: many South Africans of good will seek justice; the foes of apartheid have powerful arguments; the previous structure of society is no longer accepted or viable. Internal pressures are the principal factor. Basic social and economic pressures toward modernization of labor relations and rational urbanization are severely undermining apartheid.

Most recently, in the past 21 months of unrest and violence, we are witnessing a new level of domestic political pressure. The black community is making clear its unwillingness to passively accept continuing exclusion from the benefits of citizenship. They demand equal political and economic participation in their own land.

What about outside pressures? I believe they have a complementary role to play. Though U.S. influence is limited, it exists, and we are using it. Carefully targeted actions, statements, and signals from overseas can make a difference—both in encouraging change and channeling change so that it leads to something better, not something worse or equally bad.

There is a myth that U.S. policy toward South Africa consists of "quiet diplomacy" or "persuasion, not pressure." Those descriptions are simply wrong. We use both public and private channels for communicating our views to the South African Government and people. By the same token, we consider that pressures, appropriately designed, are an integral part of our diplomacy toward South Africa.

Let me give you just one example. When South African forces recently made cross-border raids into three neighboring countries, we strongly and promptly condemned this action. We expelled the senior South African military attache in this country and withdrew our own from Pretoria to protest these wrong-headed and self-destructive raids. We have taken other steps to leave no doubt in the minds of South Africa's leaders that their actions were unacceptable, unjustified, and will not assist the internal negotiations and regional diplomacy we believe are indispensable for all of southern Africa. They must know that such activity completely isolates them in the world community.

At the same time, we must recognize that in the past year the South African Government has begun meaningful reform. It has abolished laws against mixed marriages; it has expanded some forms of property rights for blacks; and it has reformed the pass laws, the tools of day-to-day control over the black population. But more—much more—remains to be done. Apartheid must be dismantled. Even the South African Government now acknowledges that the system is doomed. The question we now face is not *whether* apartheid will end but how and when it will go and what will replace it.

The Role of American Influence

American policy has consistently pressed for change in South Africa over several decades—and under both Republican and Democratic administrations. President Kennedy's 1962 embargo on military exports to South Africa has been followed by other steps as Americans of both parties have created the building blocks of a morally and strategically responsible policy.

Most recently, President Reagan's Executive Order of September 9, 1985, laid out our view of the careful application of pressures. In that decision, designed to send a clear signal that Americans are united about apartheid, we made every effort to distinguish clearly between constructive and destructive pressures.

At this time of renewed American attention to South Africa, let us remember our goal: we seek the end of apartheid, racism, and repression. Hence, our actions should target apartheid policies and institutions and dissociate us from them. Our aim is *not*—I repeat, *not*—to inflict random, indiscriminate damage on the South African people and their economy from abroad.

Americans must not be at all complacent or satisfied with the pace or content of such change to date. And we are not. Our moral abhorrence of racism and repression, to be effective, however, must be informed about the basic dynamics of the South African situation. We have a moral responsibility to understand how we can most effectively influence developments in South Africa in the direction of peaceful and constructive change.

So let me emphasize that the premise of President Reagan's policy is that we dare not ignore South Africa or merely strike a pose. We cannot play the part of a Pontius Pilate, washing our hands of a gross injustice that demands solution. But we must tailor our approach to those things that will really help end apartheid and promote a post-apartheid society that protects the individual liberties of all South Africans.

And there are other ways we can make our influence felt:

- We can, and we do, help stricken communities to rebuild themselves.
- Both public and nongovernmental U.S. groups can bring resources and counsel to bear to help build a post-apartheid society. Our rapidly growing assistance programs and grants are a start.
- South Africa's churches, many of them affiliated with U.S. counterparts, represent a major asset to help all those who wish to build rather than destroy their country. They represent voices of conciliation, decency, dialogue, and community service in the interest of the common humanity of all South Africans. They need your help. They need more—not less—American involvement.

A Time for Negotiations

The Bible tells us that there is a season for every change. There is a time to deliberate and a time to decide. In South Africa, now is the time to decide;

now is the time for negotiation. Negotiation alone offers the prospect of peaceful change. Negotiation alone involves the black community in a process designed to make that country whole.

All of the people of South Africa must rise to the moral challenge that peaceful change demands. A week ago, at the UN Special Session on the Critical Economic Crisis in Africa, I saw delegates from virtually all countries of the continent rise to a different challenge: the challenge of discarding old orthodoxies about development in favor of policies that work.

Turning to the broader African scene, we are so accustomed to bad news that we have a tendency to overlook major positive developments. One of the positive developments of the special session was its publication of a "Program of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development." This remarkable document recognizes the need for partnership between Africans and non-Africans. Africans recognize that they must set their houses in order—a difficult and often painful process. We need to support such African efforts by timely and appropriate assistance. As I mentioned in my speech to the special session, we are going to have to concentrate our foreign assistance in those countries which themselves are undertaking to establish the right policy framework. We are confident that concerned Americans like yourselves will want to lend their voice to strengthen chances for a sustained American compact with Africa.

Africa today is a continent searching for a better future; and South Africans now have it in their power to join that movement. But they will be left out if political instability continues and negotiations founder. That course would be a tragedy—not only for the people of South Africa itself but for the rest of the subcontinent which stands to benefit enormously and lose greatly without it; it stands to benefit enormously from a stable and just South Africa.

To be effective in our actions, we have to understand: our influence in South Africa is finite. We want to retain it, use it carefully, tailor it to evolving circumstances. Our investment is less than 1% of all fixed investment in South Africa, and our trade less than 15% of its foreign trade. Limited though our economic presence is, we are a force for decency and change.

Thus, the American private sector must remain involved. American companies in South Africa are the building blocks of our influence. That is why we oppose disinvestment. If American companies withdraw, we and the black majority of South Africa will be deprived of a major source of influence. American capitalism is an engine of peaceful change, integrating the workplace and giving black South Africans a greater stake in their country's future. Disinvestment undermines both these processes. It deprives employees of these companies of their daily wage; and it deprives them of institutions that play a vital role in integrating South African society.

Conclusion

You are moral leaders in America. Americans require your leadership to demonstrate that we do not need to become destroyers in order to fight against apartheid. There are constructive ways to exert pressure in support of our common goal of a democratic South Africa. Americans—by staying and building, not cutting and running—can help build a freer South Africa.

South Africa today is a wounded nation, but it is also a nation of great strengths. Its people are diverse, hard working, and talented; its economy is the most modern on the continent; and it is rich in aspirations for a better future. The vast majority of South Africans do not want violence, and they do not want to choose between a black or a white dictatorship. They want a democracy that knows no color and gives equal protection to both the majority and to minorities. That is what the South Africans want; that is what the American people want—especially those of you gathered here today. Together, we have a chance to help bring that future to life.■

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